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ABSTRACT

This paper analyzes the relationship between levels of educational attainment and outcomes for African American males, in particular the likelihood of conflict with the criminal justice system. The analysis begins with a look at society's belief system and political and economic forces, and argues that these have combined to promote failure among African American children. The analysis goes on to look at the importance of black family life and the effect of changes in federal funding policies on the decay of black families. A following section looks at alternative and supplementary education approaches from immersion schools to Afrocentric curricula to "rites of passage" programs. A section on educational change calls for teaching African history, other reforms for the educational system, and the increased involvement of middle income, educated African Americans in assisting the achievement of black children. The second half of the paper looks at the incarceration of black male youth, from current injustices and problems with the criminal justice system to the relationship between drugs and criminal activity. A concluding section summarizes the preceding sections and suggests some directions for change. Included are 75 references. (JB)

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AFRICAN-AMERICAN MALES:

EDUCATION OR INCARCERATION

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October, 1991

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EDUCATION

"From the teaching of science the Negro was likewise eliminated. The beginnings of science in various parts of the Orient were mentioned, but the Africans' early advancement in this field was omitted. Students were not told that ancient Africans of the interior knew sufficient science to concoct poisons for arrowheads, to mix durable colors for paintings, to extract metals from nature and refine them for development in the industrial arts. Very little was said about the chemistry in the method of Egyptian embalming which was the product of the mixed breeds of Northern Africa, now known in the modern world as "colored people."

Carter G. Woodson
Miseducation of the Negro
1933

"If we can finance a war overnight, such as we did in the Persian Gulf--then surely we can finance a war against educational failure; poverty; and class, race, and sex discrimination in America."

Robert L. Green, 1991

The level of educational attainment is by and large the single most important variable in determining the relative economic and social status of African-American males. Such factors as the formation of families and marriage rates, employment, health insurance coverage, the maintenance of independent households, and incarceration are all intimately connected with the amount or lack of education of African-American males. The more education an African-American male has, the more likely he is to be employed, self-supporting and married, and the less likely to be in conflict with the criminal justice system (Sum & Fogg, 1989; Simms, 1990; Bureau of Census, 1990; Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1988).

Despite the strong relationship between education and quality of life, African-American males' rates of educational attainment are declining,

particularly in higher education. In 1989 only 27.1 percent of 18-to 24-year-old African-American male high school graduates attended college, although 76.1 percent had completed high school. By 1988 the college participation rate for middle-income Blacks had dropped to 36 percent from 53 percent in 1976. Low-income Black males suffered similar declines in this period, from a 37.2 percent college participation rate in 1976 to 23 percent in 1988 (Wilson & Carter, 1990). These disturbing statistics, in conjunction with the ever-increasing high school dropout rates, point out the severity of the problems for African-American males in the educational system.

PROMOTING FAILURE

Belief systems are the framework upon which cultures and societies function (Locust, 1990). For the past 40 to 50 years, Americans have been bombarded with the belief that African-American children are deficient and do not have the ability to achieve as other children. The pervasive deficit model that has shaped so many of our public and private policies has persisted from the founding of this nation to the present. Social scientists and educators have "bought in" to this belief by perpetuating the attitudes and mores of the larger society. Both directly and indirectly, the children and society have suffered (Ratteray, 1989; Boykin, 1984).

Education is inextricably linked to economic and political forces in the wider society. Since the school is a major socialization agent during the course of a child's lifetime (aside from the family) it is the school where the child learns a sense of self-worth, self-identification and anticipates

his/her eventual experiences as an adult. It is within this framework that we will explore some of the current trends, myths, and alternatives for the African-American male; for we feel that it is he who epitomizes the type of disenfranchisement and "legitimized stratification" we have witnessed in our urban public schools.

. Self-identification is an all-important process in the development of personality, maturity and self-concept. Part of this process begins in a historical context. The citations at the beginning of this chapter on education refer to the deliberate omissions in regard to history and represent the type of curriculum that is not only inaccurate but highly inadequate.* Many believe, and it is perpetuated by those in the educational system, that African-Americans have inherited no culture of their own, primarily because it did not take the same form as the written history of European Americans (Ratteray, 1989). Even as early as pre-school, children begin to perceive the differences in the way others are viewed in comparison to the dominant culture. As Kunjufu (1986) points out, Black males as early as the fourth grade begin to show symptoms of the ***failure syndrome***. It is by this time they have become cognizant of the lack of investment on the part of the school and the teachers in their learning process. Already at this early age these

* Rather surprisingly a great deal of the resistance to Afro-centric and multicultural curricula comes not from the less educated but from scholars from institutions like Stanford and other similarly prestigious universities. The principal opponents of multicultural curricula are most often White males, who in general have a vested interest in maintaining the status quo in academic research and instruction. Those in opposition refuse to see Afro-centric and multicultural studies for what they are: an important step in the direction of fairness and accuracy.

young Black boys have also become aware of the broader societal expectations for African-American males. They know that society expects Black males to be good athletes but not good students, to be actively engaged in drugs and other criminal activities, to be, in general, failures. An overwhelming body of research shows that what society, and teachers, expect often becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy (Chaikin and Derlega, 1978; Green, 1977, 1987).

Generally, urban (public) school settings have been characterized as being cold and unforgiving to African-American male youngsters. Too often these youngsters are viewed by White teachers (and Black teachers who subscribe to the existing model of administration) as a nuisance. Moreover, people are biased in their judgments of different appearances; students who look different are judged differently. The only way these Black boys can make up for this difference is to be "well behaved" (Kunjufu, 1986; Boykin, 1984; Perry; 1990). Consequently, many young African-American males unfairly receive labels, such as "hyperactive" or "slow learner," which haunt them for the balance of their primary education (Hare, 1986; Kunjufu, 1986). Further, labeling can have lasting effects on self-identification and self-esteem, affecting issues of motivation and academic achievement for the balance of the child's educational experience (Parham & McDavis, 1987).

Coggins et al (1990) conducted a study of over 200 Black male youth who were incarcerated in the Atlanta Youth Development Centers. Their findings revealed that the critical deficit of these youth was a lack of positive self-identity and self-esteem. Given that only 37% of the African-American male prison population had completed the 12th grade and illiteracy levels hovered at 70%, it is readily conceivable that their experiences in the

educational system had been far from positive. This absence of constructive interaction with the school system is reflected in much of the data.

Regarding academic achievement, numerous studies have shown that African-American males achieve at significantly lower levels than other groups. For example in Milwaukee, 80 percent of the city's Black males earn less than a "C" average in high school (Collison, 1991; Whitaker, 1991). In a study of Black males in the New Orleans Public Schools, there was a disproportionate number represented in almost all categories of academic failure. While Black males represented 43% of the New Orleans' public school population in 1986-87, they accounted for 58 percent of the non-promotions, 65% of the suspensions, 80% of the expulsions, and 45% of the dropouts (Garibaldi, 1989). Consequently, more African-American males are being placed in special education classes more often than members of majority groups. They are disproportionately misclassified and placed in classes for the mentally retarded or are tracked into slow learning classes with the possibility of never being mainstreamed. The author knows, however, from firsthand experience as an educational consultant in school desegregation cases that the decision-making procedures that result in African-American boys being placed in special classes are often highly subjective and prejudicial. Yet all the while, children from majority groups are being placed in academic areas such as advanced science and math courses that prepare them for college placement in competitive institutions (Task Force, 1990, p.35; Dent, 1989; Kunjufu, 1986). This is another illustration of how the school is perpetuating economic and political stratification (Percell, 1977).

It is a common belief among many social scientists that African-American parents are unable to provide an appropriate intellectual atmosphere in the home or the kinds of toys and books that promote intellectual growth (Boykin, 1983). All of these characteristics are assumed to be exacerbated by or otherwise linked to a purported lack of structural integrity in the African-American family, particularly in homes lacking a male head of household. All in all, the picture that emerges is that African-American children have generally grown up in a web of social pathology and inadequacy that leaves them ill-equipped to meet academic demands (Boykin, 1983, p 328). Empirical evidence, however, shows that children from one-parent homes can and do exhibit high levels of academic achievement.

Johnson, Prom and Wallace (1988) conducted an extensive study on home environment, talented minority youth and school achievement. Their study was directed at assessing the consequences of the changing structure of the American family and determining whether the increasing number of one-parent households headed by females had an effect on student success. And, further, they sought to test their premise that the involvement of African-American and other minority parents is an integral component in improving school performance. Within this general framework, the study examined the home environment of a population of low income, academically talented minority youth--80% African-American, 12% Hispanic, and 4% Native Americans and Asians. The gender composition was 44% female and 56% male. Among their important findings was the fact that a youth's being from a one-parent family did not impede or hinder the child's academic excellence and success. As a matter of fact, students from one-parent families had somewhat higher scores

than two-parent families. The trend of the data suggested that the development of academically talented students in low-income African-American families can occur under various environmental conditions and various levels of education.

Finally, the evidence showed that in spite of social hardships and barriers, minority parents who have high aspirations and expectations for their children have a profound influence. The research clearly demonstrates that the children of such parents can and do go on to pursue high levels of education and obtain challenging careers. These data also support the detailed work of Reginald Clark, whose findings and analysis of the African-American family show that parents of successful students are more optimistic about life and have higher aspirations for their children, regardless of income or number of parents. Studies of this nature confirm that it is not the number of parents, but the level of parental expectations regarding academic achievement that is the determining factor in the educational achievement of African-American youth (Green, 1987, 1990).

THE IMPORTANCE OF BLACK FAMILY LIFE

In the context of parental expectations it would be appropriate here to state that there has been no more enduring source of inspiration and support for the educational goals of its Black children than the African-American family. Beginning with DuBois and E. Franklin Frazier, and continuing into present with the research of Robert Hill, Harriet McAdoo, and others, the work of these scholars shows the strength and resourcefulness of the Black family

under the various forms of oppression it has faced (DuBois, 1907; Frazier, 1939; Hill, 1971; McAdoo, 1988). As Billingsley points out (1968), the Black family "has proved to be an amazingly resilient institution." This resiliency is demonstrated by the fact that despite the horrors of slavery, despite the disruptions of the Northern migrations, and despite a history of continuous economic deprivation, Black nuclear families and kin-related households largely remained intact. Indeed, until the 1960s, 75 percent of Black households with a child under 18 included both parents (Jaynes and Williams, 1989).

Today, however, the Black family is being threatened in ways as it has never been threatened before. Although there have been some gains for middle-and upper-class Blacks, in the last decade relative Black family income was at its lowest than at any other period since 1967-68 (Cotton, 1989). This economic decline added to the systematic cutback in government economic assistance to families and, more important, the cutbacks in training and economic development programs, has had far-reaching and multiple negative effects on the Black family. A virtual state of siege is probably not too strong a characterization for the present state of Black family life, particularly for low income Blacks.

This is not, however, a statement of hopelessness. Rather it is a recognition of the scope and the urgency of the serious problems affecting the African-American family. At the same time we should recognize that many of the remedies to these problems exist within the African-American community itself. One remedy suggested in particular is a renewed emphasis on the Black family and Black family life. Whether in political, academic, economic,

social, or religious contexts, there is a paramount need for African-American leaders to reemphasize the central importance and dignity of the African-American family. The African-American family must rebuild and reinforce that strength and resiliency that has been the basis of its survival.

Part of this rebuilding should involve giving greater support to the traditional (and varied) forms of extended familial relationships within the African-American family. As McAdoo has noted, the patterns of mutual support that have been so beneficial are now even more important to Black families than ever (1988; see also Manns, W. in McAdoo). It may be grandparents, aunts and uncles as well as mothers and fathers who are doing the rearing, but whoever it is we must see that much more is done to enhance the economic and social status of those who are most responsible for Black family life. For it is long before a child goes to school that a significant part of his or her educational foundation is being laid at home, in the family. As the evidence shows, families under stress are generally less capable of helping their children build strong educational foundations (Comer, 1987). There are no families under greater stress than is the African-American family. We must therefore begin focusing more efforts to secure the well-being of the African-American family if we hope to increase the educational attainment of the African-American male, and of African-American people in general.

ALTERNATIVE AND SUPPLEMENTARY EDUCATION

Today a sizable number of independent schools are owned and operated in major urban areas to serve African-American children who reside within the

neighborhood. There are about 400 such schools in the U.S., with an estimated enrollment of 52,000. These schools are seen as one viable answer to the educational dilemma faced by many Black children, in particular Black boys (Ratteray, 1989; Ascher, 1991).

From their many studies at the Institute for Independent Education, Ratteray, et al (1989) found that African-American students do not need to be surrounded by White students and high-income families in order to experience academic success. In a survey of several magnet schools where the enrollment was predominantly African-American with large numbers from low-income families, it was found that high expectations on the part of the teachers--that is, believing that the students were capable of high achievement--played a pivotal role in the students' success (Green, 1977; 1987, 1990; McKenzie, 1991).

In the middle of much current controversy are the primary schools with the exclusive focus on young African-American male students. The "immersion" process is a pilot educational program which is being developed and implemented in major urban areas all over the country.

Milwaukee has started African-American Immersion Schools which are designed to emphasize African and African-American culture, build self-esteem and promote rewards for responsible male behavior. Similar Male Academies were established by the Detroit Public School board, but in Detroit as in Milwaukee court rulings required that these academies modify their admissions policies to allow for the entry of female students. After making this

modification, the administrators of the two cities' academies say that the enhancement of the self-esteem and academic achievement of the African-American male will nevertheless remain the principal focus of these immersion schools. Portland, Oregon, is one of the first major school systems in the country to institute ***The African-American Baseline Essays***. Out of the 55,000 students in that system, 74% are White. African-Americans account for the next largest group comprising 15% of the population, but the rates of expulsion for Black children in the Portland schools were three to five times higher than for White children. And just as important, there were few African-American teachers to serve as role models. The Baseline Essays are just part of the growing curriculum of the Portland schools, where it has been acknowledged that there is the need for a change in the educational process.

Over the past five years there has been a continued increase in the performance of African-American male students in Portland schools. Part of this improvement is due to the Afro-centric curriculum that has been implemented. An equally significant part of the improvement results from the emphasis the Portland school system places on the overall requirement of academic competence. Finally, a systematic approach to getting teachers to hold high expectations for minority students has been another important factor in increasing the achievement of African-American male students (Green, 1988). Progressive educators and school boards in other cities such as New Orleans, Dayton, Baltimore, and Washington, D.C. have recognized the seriousness of the problem and are instituting similar programs to intervene for Black male children.

Spencer Holland (1987), a forerunner in the institution of programs primarily for African-American male youth, states that the fundamental intent of these schools is to prevent the development of negative attitudes toward academic achievement. Further, one of the most crucial psychosocial deficits in the environment of inner city Black male youth is the lack of consistent, positive and literate African-American male role models. To provide such role models is the aim of these schools and academies.

"Rites of Passage" programs are also being initiated across the country. These programs are part of the organized efforts on the part of African-American male elders in the community to provide a sense of definition of manhood for the younger males. The Rites of Passage is an ancient African ceremony whose intent is to shape the identification process and add definition to the development of African-American manhood. In more recent generations, however, the African-American community has ceased to practice and recognize the male child's transition into manhood. This is why programs such as these are being implemented, to impede the dramatic increase of young African-American males who find camaraderie in gangs, the drug culture, and other self-destructive associations. These programs are also of great significance because they recognize that personal growth and development must be tied to academic success (Hill, 1987; Kunjufu, 1986).

EDUCATIONAL CHANGE

At the beginning of this chapter we cited Carter G. Woodson, who recognized that integral components of African and African-American history

were not being taught to our children. Over 60 years later, the same problem still exists --the quiet acceptance of the refusal to teach history the way it was. Woodson recognized, as well as did W.E.B. DuBois, that without a knowledge and firm grasp of our history, we are destined to falter. In understanding our history we are made to realize that we are still in the throes of an educational dilemma. There need to be fundamental changes made in the rules, roles, and relationships dictated by our educational policies (QEM, 1990).

Three hundred ten billion dollars is spent on education in the U.S. including colleges and universities, more than what is spent on defense. Although American universities are the best in the world, the elementary and high schools pale in comparison to other countries (Nussbaum, 1988). This approach to spending is counterproductive. It takes a successful elementary school student to have a reasonably successful academic career. It is the prevention strategies in the early school years that can make all the difference. In essence, the United States is getting a lot less for its education dollar than those in other industrialized nations such as Japan and Europe (Nussbaum, 1988; McKenzie, 1991).

The waste of human capital and the lack of productivity have been the result of the American educational system's awkward maintenance of the status quo. More energy has been wasted in legislation, zoning, budgets, strikes and school boards than in educating children. As a result, IBM Corporation had to teach high school algebra to thousands of workers before they could operate the computers which the company spent millions of dollars to install. These

instances of the lack of skills and knowledge are even more apparent in the Black urban community.

Further, America's educational system continues to be based on an agricultural model. Our school days are not in concert with other industrial and technological societies. Students in the United States attend class only 180 days a year. In France and Germany, the school year extends for 220 days, and Japanese children attend school for 240 days. Consequently, these countries are more competitive in the world market. Japan's burgeoning economic success stems in part from the fact that "its blue collar workers can interpret advanced mathematics, read engineering blue prints, and perform sophisticated tasks in the factory far better than their American counterparts" (Nussbaum, 1988, p 101).

On the other hand, only 4% of the student population in this country choose science or engineering majors. George Campbell, Jr., President of the National Action Council for Minorities in Engineering (NACME), states that fields such as engineering require one to take calculus and physics before graduating from high school. However, taking such courses is the exception rather than the rule for secondary education in the U.S. It is estimated that a mere 8% of all high school students even take calculus. More disturbing than that statistic is the fact that only 47% of African-American students study mathematics beyond algebra I. Campbell goes on to state that most Black children are locked out of engineering and a staggering number of other jobs as early as the 10th and 11th grades. To compete in a tight market, students must ideally start preparing for the work world as early as the fourth grade.

The most challenging and the most significant issue as far as the future strength of our economy is concerned is that minorities will constitute over one third of the work force by the year 2000 (Bureau of Census, 1990; Nussbaum, 1988; Task Force, 1990; Children's Defense Fund, 1990; QEM, 1990).

Although African-American men have shown increases in high school completion rates, fewer make plans to further their education. This is crucial, because this is a time when the job market demands skills that extend well beyond high school.

AFRICAN-AMERICANS AND THE EDUCATION OF OUR CHILDREN

We firmly believe that it is our responsibility to educate our children.

Educated, middle-class Blacks in particular must play a greater role in furthering the educational achievement of African-American children. Wilson (1987) has noted the long-term negative impact of the general departure of professional, middle-class African-Americans from Black urban communities. Many of those negative consequences can be diminished or overcome, however, by better-skilled, better-educated Blacks resolving to give back some of their time and skills to the African-American community and its youth. Spencer Holland, Paul Hill and many others across the country are showing what positive accomplishments can be achieved when a portion of time and commitment is given to community outreach. Whether it be involvement in a Saturday academy, tutoring, mentoring, or comparable activities, middle-class Blacks must do more to ensure the survival and well-being of this and the next

generation of African-American males. In committing themselves to this work educated Blacks will also be helping to ensure their own survival and well-being and that of the entire African-American community.

Further, we advocate piloting programs and schools for African-American males based on the following premises:

- ***Such schools <u>emphasize</u> reading, math, science, writing, and communication skills.***
- ***Such schools should focus on enhancing self-esteem and must hold high expectations for academic achievement.***
- ***Such schools should focus on the development of positive values, i.e., hard work, honesty, integrity and total respect for others.***
- ***Finally, since the majority of African-American males attend racially segregated schools, the issue of "racial separatism" in the schools is a moot point.***

Given the above conditions, schools for African-American males are defensible. In this respect, we advocate whatever progressive and positive alternatives there are for African-American males to receive a decent education, to achieve what they have the inherent ability to achieve, and to be productive members of society. It is the author's belief, however, that African-American girls should have the same kind of nurturing educational environment and that, ultimately, African-American boys and girls should come together to study and to learn the cooperative lessons of male-female relationships.

INCARCERATION

"Sure, it's true we prosecute a high percentage of minorities for drugs. The simple fact is, if you have a population--minority or not--that is conducting most of their illegal business on the street, those cases are easy pickings for the police."

Charles Butler, Assistant Prosecutor
Delaware
Cited from the Los Angeles Times, May 1990

UNEQUAL JUSTICE

As we enter the 1990s, the United States has gained the dubious reputation of being the number one jailer in the world. Even though the crime rate has dropped by 3.5% since 1980, the prison population has doubled in that period (Mauer, 1990). For the most part this increase has been at the expense of African-American males. And as grim as the incarceration rates are for African-American males, what is even more grim is the widely disproportionate number of African-American males who are on death row. Although only 12.1% of the total population, as of December 31, 1990, African-Americans made up 40% of the prisoners on Death Row (Cleveland Plain Dealer, 1991).

The swelling numbers of people incarcerated can be linked to harsher criminal justice policies of the past decade (Mauer, 1991), another legacy of the Reagan years. Mandatory sentencing laws which require incarceration are now in 46 states. The new sentencing guidelines and harsher drug laws are expected to result in 119 percent increase in the federal prison population form 1987 to 1997 (The U.S. Sentencing Commission, 1987). Although some of

the disparities in incarceration rates between other countries and the United States can in some degree be explained in terms of differences in prison "systems," what is most apparent is that one of the wealthiest societies in the world has failed to provide a relatively safe society, a society that administers justice equitably (Mauer, 1991).

To gain an accurate perspective on the alarmingly high and continuingly growing prison rolls in this country, it must be pointed out that the United States has a higher incarceration rate than even that of South Africa. The incarceration rate in South Africa is 333 prisoners per 100,000, second highest in the world. The United States has the highest known rate of incarceration in the world, with 426 prisoners per 100,000. Taking into consideration that internal protests against South Africa's apartheid regime have been one of the main catalysts for its sizeable prison population, their rate of imprisonment is still significantly below the United States, the self-proclaimed leader of the free world (Mauer, 1990, 1991).

If we make a more detailed comparison of South Africa and the United States, we see an even more glaring discrepancy between the rates of incarceration of Black men in the two countries. The Black male population in the United States as of 1990 was 14,625,000 vs 15,050,642 in South Africa. Yet the rate of incarceration in the United States of Black males is 3,109 per 100,000, while by comparison South Africa's incarceration rates of Black males could be considered low at 729 per 100,000. Not only are these differences in incarceration rates statistically significant, but the differences in the ratio of Black men in each of the countries dramatizes yet further the

disparities here in the United States. The majority of the population in South Africa is Black, whereas only 6% of the United States population is comprised of Black males (Mauer, 1991).

It is clear from other reports and surveys that few other nations whose incarceration rates are known approach these levels. Rates of incarceration for Western Europe, for example, are generally in the range of 35-120 per 100,000, and for most countries in Asia, in the range of 21-140 per 100,000 (Penal Reform International, 1990). The question that remains is why is the United States leading the rest of the world in the development of "another society," a prison society?

DRUGS AND EDUCATIONAL FAILURE

There is a direct correlation between the growth of crime and the disproportionately low incomes available in the African-American community, the social and economic decline of our urban areas, the failure in the schools, and lack of institutional support systems in the Black community. Despite these conditions, however, it is the proverbial "War on Drugs" that is one of the largest single factors behind the rise in prison populations during the past decade. The number of African-Americans arrested for drug offenses has increased at a more rapid rate than the arrest rate for the population as a whole (Mauer, 1990; Urban League, 1990). Most of these offenders, it should be noted, do not use drugs; they sell crack cocaine. Overall, 80% of all cocaine users in the U.S. are White, while only 14% are African-Americans (Raspberry, 1991).

The number of African-American males in the 20-29 age group entangled in the criminal justice system totals 609,690. The number of African-American males in higher education, 495,000. This translates into nearly one in four Black men in the age group of 20-29 on any given day being under the control of the criminal justice system--in prison or jail, on probation or parole. (U.S. Department of Justice, 1988; U.S. Department of Education, 1990).

There is growing evidence of a connection between the nation's faltering education system and the increasing crime rates. In 1986 approximately 50% of inmates in state prisons had less than an 11th grade education. In some state prisons, as much as 70 percent of the population is believed to be illiterate (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1988; Kidder, 1990). Aside from the race factor, illiteracy may be the strongest common denominator among all prisoners (Kidder, 1990). Although juvenile facilities, jails and prisons across the country graduate thousands of students each year in high school equivalency, vocational and college programs, only 20% of state inmates are students (Wiley, 1989).

One should make note that education programs are not mandatory in the U.S. prison system. Further, there has been no federal legislation regarding compulsory education while in prison, even though studies have shown that it contributes to a significant reduction in recidivism rates. On the other hand, some states spend more annually on housing prisoners than the cost of going to an Ivy League school. For example, it cost $850,000 to house 10 prisoners for 5 years (Kidder, 1990), and prosecution, court and incarceration cost taxpayers $45.6 billion in 1985. The total cost of incarcerating more

than one million Americans in prisons and jails is estimated at $16 billion per year. The cost of incarcerating the estimated 454,724 African-American male inmates is almost $7 billion a year (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1990).

Over a decade ago national and state policymakers had choices in terms of how the nation's tax dollars would be used in response to higher crime rates. The first option was to build new prisons and jails at a cost of $50,000 per cell and spend $20,000 a year to house each prisoner. The second option was to spend tax dollars on prevention policies and services, on programs designed to generate employment and provide quality education, on health care and housing, and on programmatic alternatives to incarceration and increased prison cells. The policies of the first option were the ones adopted. But although these policies were chosen, they have not contributed to the abatement of the rate of crime nor to the rate of incarceration. Further, criminologists contend that the system can have an effect on crimes only by increasing the certainty of arrest, not the severity of punishment (Mauer, 1991). Given that the total cost of crime is estimated to have been between $26.9 billion and 136.9 billion dollars in 1986 (the range is not narrower because many of the costs of running the system cannot be measured directly), would not billions of these dollars be far better spent in eliminating some of the conditions that breed crime?

The term "endangered species" will be literal for African-American males if the rates of imprisonment continue as they have been into the next century. The National Council on Crime Delinquency projects that our prison population alone, exclusive of jail inmates, will rise by 68 percent, from 703,000 in 1989 to over 1,133,000 in 1994 (Mauer, 1991).

An assessment of the data indicates that the main catalyst for increased incarceration is drug offenses. Given the unemployment situation and the state of the economy for the 90s, drug sales for many African-American youth may continue to present themselves as one viable option to obtain income and material necessities.

The Sentencing Project has made the following recommendations for public policy, which we feel are comprehensive and which meaningfully address some of the dangerous policies and trends currently in place.

1) Establish a national commission to examine the high rate of imprisonment of African-American males.

2) Direct the General Accounting Office to become involved in determining how social and economic factors are affected by crime.

3) Direct the Justice Department to fund pilot programs to reduce the high rate of incarceration of African-American males.

4) Redirect the "war on drugs" to define drug abuse as a public health problem and not a criminal justice problem.

5) Redirect the focus of law enforcement to address community needs and to prevent crime.

6) Reduce recidivism rates of prisoners by providing effective services.

7) Repeal mandatory sentencing laws.

8) Expand the use of alternatives to incarceration.

9) Engage in a national dialogue on issues of crime and punishment.

Wiley (1989) advocates the implementation of the following policies regarding the education of prisoners in the system.

> A condition of probation should be participation in an educational program.

All prisons, jails, and juvenile facilities should provide comprehensive educational programs.

Participation in an educational program should be a condition for release.

Given the current situation and future prospects, correctional facilities have been accurately termed as the "educators of last resort" (Wiley, 1989, p 8).

CONCLUSIONS

"Unquestionably, the Black male has played a significant role in America under some of the most adverse conditions imaginable. He was perceived as a threat to White males in particular, from 1619, the year when blacks first landed on these shores. Legislation was enacted which circumscribed his freedom of movement and limited the options which were available to him. He was denied in many instances the right to live with his family and to exercise his patriarchical functions which were commonplace in his native culture and in the culture of men throughout the world."

Dr. Benjamin Hooks
Director of the NAACP

The above citation is a simple, powerful capsulation of the African-American males' fortitude and resiliency to continue to live in a society where they have been disenfranchised on every level.

In our attempt to formulate this paper on African-American males, we reviewed numerous articles from journals, magazines and newspapers. We found for the most part that the changes that need to be made are straightforward, yet complex. The common demoninator for all these issues is the goal of parity. Parity, which is essentially the equality of life conditions, has been systematically denied to Blacks on many fronts.

Further, African-American males have been adversely impacted by distorted perceptions and unfounded beliefs, beliefs based on isolated and misleading incidents, skewed research paradigms, and the powerful, and too often negative, influence of the media.

Although we have concentrated on the many difficulties faced by African-American males in this paper, we would be remiss in our responsibility

if we did not acknowledge the many accomplishments that they have achieved. It's not too often that we hear about the dozens of African-American male Ph.D.'s continuing and completing graduate work at Florida colleges and universities in every physical and social science field imaginable. Under the direction of Dr. Israel Tribble, Jr., President of the Florida Endowment Fund in Tampa, there have been a cadre of Black males who have been given guidance and financial.support toward completing their doctoral degrees. Under the present circumstances it is safe to say that in the next ten years Dr. Tribble's program will produce more Black Ph.D.'s in the sciences than the combined total for the top ten Ph.D. granting schools in the country. Dr. Howard Adams, the Executive Director of the National Consortium for Graduate Degrees for Minorities in Engineering in South Bend, Indiana, similarly has assisted many African-American males pursuing their engineering degrees over the past several years. These are the people we do not hear about on the evening news.

In both national and world markets, Black men continue to make breakthroughs in the business world. The recent multi-billion dollar merger between Ameritech and Knowledge Data Systems, which is headed by Roger L. Plummer, is an illustration of what has been accomplished. Also consider Reginald Lewis, Head of TLC Beatrice International Holdings, Incorporated, a corporation which recently generated sales of several hundred million dollars. Dr. Arnold F. Stancell, Vice President of Mobil Oil Corporation's Exploration and Production Division, is in a position that few Americans, Black or White, would ever conceive of occupying. Yet, while we are

recognizing these laudable achievements, we must continue to focus on the vast amount of work that still is before us.

Public education has generally not provided access for the African-American male into the better-paying sectors of the labor force. For those who do not complete their secondary education, their options become extremely limited. For the African-American male, the dropout rates are entirely too high to be ignored any longer. We are losing from 50% to 60% of our Black males to the streets. In one particular Midwest high school which the author knows well the attrition rate for African-American males between 9-12th grades has gone as high as 80-85%. If the Black male is not in high school, he will not be on the college campus, but will surely be unemployed or, much worse, involved in crime.

More, much more in time and resources must be demanded from the local, state, and particularly the federal government if the educational hopes for African-American males are to be realized. With the Cold War over would it not be appropriate to reallocate some of the many millions from the defense budget and use those monies to provide meaningful, productive education for African-American males? Realistically speaking, the education of our youth should be considered as the country's first line of defense.

As the evidence has indicated in this paper, racism is the "invisible variable" that has impeded the process of achieving parity, contributing to the erosion of mores and values in this society. We can watch the news, or read the newspaper and clearly see how much the vestiges of racism continue.

The Willie Horton ad shown during the 1988 Presidential Campaign symbolizes the type of ongoing denigration by politicians who use the media to negatively profile Black males in this country. Rodney King was beaten with clubs by several White Los Angeles police officers, while as many as 20 policemen looked on, including their sergeant. Rodney King could have been a Black man with a Ph.D. in nuclear physics, a heart surgeon, or just a regular working person leaving his job after 8 hours of labor. Unquestionably, the police must be blamed for this incident, but the larger society must also share the blame, since these policemen reflect the views and attitude of too many White Americans.

As we end this paper, we must again refer to the family. The family for many African-Americans is the primary determinant of our survival in the system and this is where the invisible variable may have had the most costly impact. But in this regard, we should never forget the millions of African-American males all over the country who are hard-working, nurturing parents and responsible members of their communities, but who rarely receive the recognition they deserve for all they do to educate and to keep their families together under difficult circumstances.

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